

Sainik Schools

1304. SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the sainik schools set up during the last three years in the country. State-wise;

(b) whether not a single sainik school has been set up in the State of Bihar during the said period; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) to (c). Since 1978, no new Sainik School has been opened in any of the States in the country.

Transit Facilities through Bangladesh

1305. SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have requested Bangladesh to grant transit facilities for goods passing through that country to India's North-eastern States; and

(b) if so, the response of Bangladesh thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The Government of India have been interested in securing multi-modal transit facilities through the Bangladesh territory to the North Eastern States and have taken up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh on a number of occasions.

(b) The Government of Bangladesh have not yet reacted positively to our proposals.

External Publicity

1306. SHRI PARASRAM BHARDWAJ : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the steps being taken to revamp our external publicity departments functioning abroad so as to improve the country's image abroad and also to project our viewpoints more forcefully on sensitive and important issues;

(b) whether Government propose to appoint professionals for this purpose; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Several new steps have been taken to explain, interpret and project India's Foreign Policy objectives. These included the opening of MEA's Home Page on INTERNET; upgradation of our communications system with missions and posts abroad; use of modern publicity techniques and professional public relations; lobbying and advertising agencies; diversification and augmentation of channels of communications and mass media including projection through satellite television;

and broad basing of publicity by involvement of non-governmental and professional agencies. India's foreign and economic policies and specific initiatives in both areas have been well received. The policy of transparency combined with new initiatives on Kashmir and human rights issues and their forceful projection abroad have contained Pakistan's propaganda against India on these issues. There has been a perceptible improvement in India's international image in the media and amongst the public abroad.

(b) and (c). The Government already employ professional and professional agencies in the preparation and placement of its publicity material. Such agencies are regularly used in the production of publications, documentary or video films, feature articles on various subjects, public relation activities, advertising and media strategy.

[Translation]

Four Laning of NH-24

1307. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposal to convert the Delhi-Bareilly-Lucknow highway (National Highway-24) into four lanes is pending with the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (c). The total length of Delhi-Bareilly-Lucknow highway (NH-24) is 499 km. The portion of NH-24 from Delhi to Ghaziabad 28 km. length is already four lane. The remaining 471 km. length is having 2 lane carriageway. 4 laning of Ghaziabad-Hapur Section including Hapur bypass totalling a length of 32 km. is included in the 8th Five Year Plan and the work is proposed to be executed with loan assistance from Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (Japan). The loan agreement was signed in February 1995.

[English]

Blood Bank

1308. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any representations have been received from the State of Kerala for the issue of licences for Blood Bank during 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of licences issued to the applicant?